

# PennAqua 2002 Highlights Growing Industry

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of potential," he said.

"The industry can not just be productive, but economically productive and profitable," in the face of considerations such as biology, nutrition, waste management, food safety, and consumer behavior and marketing.

The keynote address of Thursday was delivered by Albert Tacon, director, Aquatic Feeds and Nutrition, Aquatic Farms Ltd., Hawaii.

The challenges facing the aquatic industry are no different than any other food sector, said Tacon. The industry, which is growing at a rate of 9-10 percent per year, based on year 2000 data, is very heterogeneous, boasting more than 200 species of plants and animals.

Half of the aquatic products (mainly seaweeds, which command \$2-\$3 per pound) are grown in sea water and are mostly for human consumption.

Besides seaweed, aquaculture supplies 70 percent of all the fish that America consumes, to the tune of 14.8 pounds of seafood per person in 2001.

In fact, U.S. consumers spent \$553 billion for fishery products in 2001, according to Tacon.

On the world front, China alone produces 72 percent of total world aquaculture pro-

duction, followed by India and Japan.

Citizens of developing countries, he said, tend to consume more fish — 50 percent of the protein they consume — since it is a more accessible and affordable source of protein.

As a farming activity in the U.S., aquaculture still has a minor position in, for instance, government policy and considerations, he said.

"We have a seafood trade deficit of almost \$7 billion. That the politicians understand."

The U.S. imports \$3.6 billion of shrimp, for example. Major exporters of fish (by value) are first Thailand, then China, and third Norway.

America, which exports feed, runs the risk of supplying the world with cheap feed inputs and being swamped with higher cost food imports, he said.

In the U.S., 63 percent of aquaculture production is channel catfish, followed by the Pacific cupped oyster and rainbow trout.

Tacon sees the future of aquaculture in America in a positive light.

"We have a freight train and its growing very fast, although not in all sectors," said Tacon. Growth depends on how the industry faces certain challenges, he said.

For example, aquaculture

operators will have to become environmentally and ecologically responsible and socially acceptable, he said.

"At the end of the day, the top of the food chain is the consumer, because they either buy or don't buy fish," Tacon said, so fish food and human food safety are important concerns to the industry.

Traceability and labeling will become more important to health- and safety-conscious consumers.

Also, marketing will also become increasingly important. "We've got to get a lot smarter at convincing people to eat a lot more fish and touting the protein's health benefits," he said.

Tacon sees increased biosecurity and increased transparency in food production on the horizon for the industry. In addition, aquaculture needs to position itself as a recycler of aquatic feed and wastes — turning by-products into food.

Marc Toscano, Pennsylvania State Director, National Ag Statistics Service, informed conference attendees about the 2002 aquaculture census that will count all the aquaculture growers in the commonwealth. The project is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and is a mandatory census. Results will be summarized and public when all the reports are in.

On the other hand, the trout

census, funded by the USDA, includes 20 major states, and is voluntary. Results should be summarized and published by Feb. 28. Information in both surveys is confidential.

Thomas Zeigler, president, Zeigler Brothers, Inc., a specialty feed manufacturer, Gettysburg, also spoke at the conference.

"There is a growing consensus that aquaculture is destined to play a major role in supplying the world with food," he said. Industry lead-

ership and vision, government support, and adequate research is necessary for growth, he said.

Zeigler presented details on several years of milestones in Pennsylvania aquaculture.

The commonwealth hosts 160 aquaculture facilities, he said. However, Pennsylvania is significantly behind in reaching its economic potential — it is lagging in its contribution to the total Pennsylvania economy, said Zeigler.

## Greenhouse, Landscape School Feb. 26

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in Bradford County will host a Greenhouse and Landscape School on Feb. 26 at the Patterson Building at Guthrie Square in Sayre from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

There will be concurrent sessions for both greenhouse growers and landscapers. Landscapers can come and learn which insect and mite problems that they can expect for 2003 here in northeast Pennsylvania.

Greg Hoover, extension entomologist from Penn State, will speak to landscapers about insect control. Also on the morning program will be Lee Nelson to speak about perennials in the landscape. Nelson is an authority on perennials and their care. In the afternoon, landscapers will be able to learn tips to help them more effectively prune trees and shrubs. Penn State urban forester Vinnie Cotrone will lead the workshop.

Al Scala, consultant with Penn State Seed Company will speak to greenhouse growers. Scala has more than 40 years of experience in the green industry and will speak to growers on tips for successful greenhouse management. Also on the program for greenhouse growers will be Penn State Entomologist Greg Hoover, speaking on beneficial insects and their place in

controlling pests in the greenhouse. In the afternoon, Lee Nelson will speak to greenhouse growers on perennials and their selection, care in the greenhouse, and point of purchase tips.

Cost for the program is \$25, which includes a hot lunch. Pesticide credits will be offered for this program — two core pesticide points and two category points for categories 1, 6, 18, 22, and 23.

A complete program and sign-up form can be obtained by calling the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office at (570) 265-2896. Registrations are due by Feb. 17. If you have any questions about the program, contact Tom Maloney, extension agent, at (570) 265-2896.

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